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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from June 2000 to May 2001

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 55/145 of 8 December 2000, the General Assembly considered it important "to continue its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization" and requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to "take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization". The present report, prepared in response to the above mandate, covers the activities undertaken by the Department in the field of decolonization during the period from June 2000 to May 2001.

2. The Department's activities pertaining to decolonization focused on coverage of the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, building partnerships with civil society through the network of United Nations information centres and strengthening the use of the Internet for the widest possible dissemination of information.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

3. The Department provided full and comprehensive coverage of the General Assembly debate on decolonization, including in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on decolonization. Special attention was paid to the opening of the 2001 session of the Special Committee. A background release, issued on the occasion, traced the decolonization process and explained the role of the Special Committee. The statement made by the Secretary-General at its opening was issued and widely disseminated. Attention was also paid to the views expressed by various members of the Special Committee. All press releases issued at Headquarters were distributed electronically to the network of United Nations information centres worldwide.

4. The Department also provided daily coverage of the proceedings of the Caribbean regional seminar organized by the Special Committee at Havana from 23 to 25 May 2001. A press officer of the Department was present to report on the deliberations. A background release was issued, highlighting the mandate of the Special Committee and the programme of action for the

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Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010).

III. Coverage of developments in East Timor

5. Developments in East Timor continued to be reported by the Department. Particular attention was paid to the registration for election of the Timorese people and the response of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) to violence against Timorese civilians. The Department also reported on developments concerning the transfer of power to the elected representatives of East Timor.

6. The Department facilitated the delivery of a message by the Secretary-General to the people of East Timor on the first anniversary of the popular consultation. Together with the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the Department organized a film presentation on the life of Nobel laureate José Ramos-Horta and a panel discussion on East Timor in October 2000. It also assisted in the presentation by the Elie Wiesel Foundation of its Humanitarian Award to UNAMET.

7. The Department continued to assist the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) with its information programme both inside the Territory and outside. It helped identify and select information officers and a graphic designer for UNTAET. It also organized a briefing visit by the Director of Public Information of UNTAET to United Nations Headquarters in March and April 2001.

IV. United Nations radio and television

8. The Department's radio and television sections covered various aspects of decolonization and related issues in its daily news programmes and current affairs magazines in the official and non-official languages. During the period under review, two *UN in Action* television programmes were produced on East Timor, one on the work of the International Organization of Migration in helping East Timorese return home, and the other on the changing role of peacekeepers in East Timor.

9. United Nations Radio in its news programmes continued to report on the work of the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee. News and feature reports covered such issues as the situation in East Timor and the work of UNTAET, the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), the question of Western Sahara and the talks on Western Sahara in Berlin, the Caribbean regional seminar on decolonization held at Havana in May 2001 and the observance on 8 December 2000 of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

10. During the reporting period, extensive coverage was given by United Nations Radio to the situation in East Timor, including daily developments related to the work of UNTAET, in its live broadcasts in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, as well as the daily news programmes in Portuguese.

11. United Nations Radio also conducted a number of interviews in English and Portuguese on the situation and developments in East Timor with major national and international personalities, including: Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Transitional Administrator for East Timor; Xanana Guzmão, East Timorese political leader; and José Ramos-Horta, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Transitional Government.

12. In addition, United Nations Radio produced 11 magazine/feature programmes dealing with various aspects of decolonization, including one on the anniversary of East Timor's decision to become independent. Most features were made available in Arabic, Dutch, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

13. A two-part feature dealt with the current situation in Western Sahara. Several news features looked into the question of decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. Challenges faced by small island Non-Self-Governing Territories and the dwindling interest of representatives of those Territories in the Caribbean to attend United Nations seminars on decolonization were discussed in separate radio features. A feature focusing on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) explained Argentina's claim to the islands.

V. Publications

14. *The United Nations and East Timor*, a new publication by the Department of Public Information, was issued in English and Portuguese in August and September 2000 respectively. It is a brief history of the United Nations involvement in East Timor, which culminated in the organization by UNAMET of a popular consultation on the future of East Timor in 1999 and in the establishment of UNTAET in October 2000.

15. The question of decolonization was highlighted in the Department's popular as well as institutional publications — particularly the booklet *UN in Brief* (issued in all six official languages), in its 2000 editions (DPI/2020/Rev.1); the reference paper entitled "United Nations Conferences and Observances" in its 2000 and 2001 editions (Nos. 39 and 40); and the best-selling reference book *Basic Facts about the United Nations* (2000 edition, DPI/2155), which devoted an entire chapter (chap. 7) to the United Nations action in the area of decolonization.

16. The *UN Chronicle*, the Department's quarterly magazine, continued to provide in-depth coverage of the work of the General Assembly in the field of decolonization. It reported on the Assembly's adoption at its fifty-fifth session of the recommendations of the Fourth Committee; the Assembly's commemoration on 8 December 2000 of the fortieth anniversary of its adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples; the adoption of General Assembly resolution 55/146 declaring the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism; and discussions in the Fourth Committee regarding the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories still in existence.

17. A comprehensive account of decolonization issues for the year 1998 (24 pages) was published in the *Yearbook of the United Nations* (vol. 52). The 1999 edition — currently under preparation — will also contain comprehensive coverage of decolonization issues.

VI. Internet

18. A web page (www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/main.htm) created in February 2000 to highlight developments in the area of decolonization continued to be updated. In addition to posting all decolonization-related United Nations documents, the page provides a brief history of decolonization, explains the role and work programme of the Special Committee and regularly updates its activities, including the proceedings of various regional seminars, such as the Caribbean regional seminar (23-25 May 2001).

19. The Department also maintains and regularly updates a website on UNTAET on the United Nations home page (www.un.org). It contains summary briefing notes, documents and regulations. The Department also maintains the page for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) on the United Nations website. It has offered the Mission to develop and maintain a section within the website dealing with reports emanating from the field.

VII. United Nations information centres and services

20. During the period covered by the present report, United Nations information centres organized various activities aimed at disseminating information about and promoting awareness of the United Nations work on decolonization. These include the organization of press conferences and lectures, participation in roundtables, production of information material, preparation of press releases and the arrangement of audio and visual products on the issue.

21. Following are some examples of the activities carried out by United Nation information centres:

(a) The United Nations Information Centre at Lisbon organized a press conference for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in East Timor at an International Donors Meeting on East Timor at Lisbon in June 2000; a press release in English was produced and distributed to the Portuguese media and communicated to the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General. On the anniversary of the popular consultation in East Timor, the Director of the Centre issued a press release on the role of the United Nations and introduced a book produced by the Department. In March 2001, the Director gave a lecture on the subject of "The political Transition in East Timor and State-building" at a Conference attended by government officials, non-governmental organizations and the media;

(b) The United Nations Information Centre at Sydney promoted the work of UNTAET by organizing a press conference for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Transnational Administrator for East Timor during his visit to Australia in October 2000. Press releases were issued prior to his visit as well as following his final press conference. The Centre facilitated interviews of the Special Representative with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service and the Australian Broadcasting Company (ABC) Television during his trip to Canberra. Together with corporate sponsors, the Centre produced a short video and two public service announcements on the role of the United Nations in East Timor. The products were shown on all television networks, in cinemas and prior to a sporting event drawing 100,000 spectators;

(c) In June 2000, the United Nations Information Centre in London issued a press release on the talks on Western Sahara held in London by a United Nations delegation headed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General;

(d) The United Nations Information Centre in Rome participated in a meeting on the subject of "The Principle of Self-determination as a Fundamental Right of All Peoples in the World". The meeting was organized by the Italian Parliamentary Group in support of Western Sahara. The Centre referred extensively to the report of the Secretary-General of 20 February 2001 on the situation in Western Sahara (S/2001/148);

(e) In December 2000, the United Nations Information Centre in Moscow and the Russian Centre for Scientific and Cultural Cooperation organized a roundtable on the fortieth anniversary of the Declaration of Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. During the meeting, the Director of the Centre focused on the main trends characterizing the current situation on the African continent within the context of globalization, as well as on the relationship between developing and developed countries.